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UNCLAS GUATEMALA 001692

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MAJOR COCAINE SEIZURE IN GUATEMALAN HIGHLANDS

¶1. At 09:45 local time on June 27 a Bell 212 helicopter carrying 757 kilos of cocaine crashed near the town of San Francisco el Alto, in Totonicapan Department, near the border with Mexico. Its three crew members, injured in the crash, escaped and remain at large. Local police immediately arrived at the scene and informed the SAIA (Guatemalan counter-drug police) and the Public Ministry, which came and took charge of the drugs and the investigation. The cocaine was transferred to the SAIA headquarters in Guatemala City where it is being cataloged as evidence before being destroyed. Minister of Government Reyes Calderon told reporters that the SAIA had knowledge of and was investigating this cocaine shipment, which was destined for Mexico and had apparently been delayed by bad weather.

¶2. This seizure brings the GOG's total cocaine seizures for the first six months of 2003 to 3,668 kilos (611 kilos a month); up from a total of 2,400 kilos seized in all of 2002.

HAMILTON